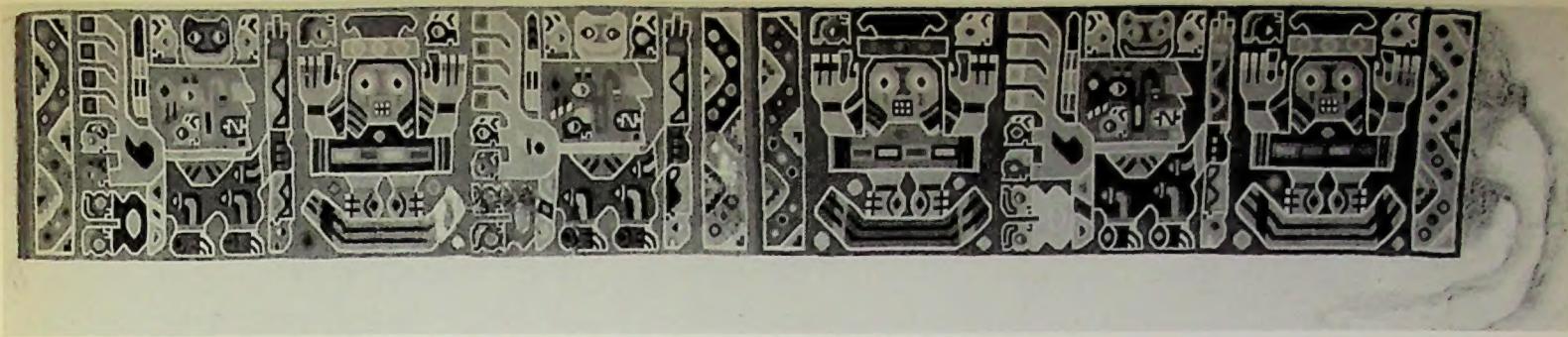


TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL



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COVER: Detail of interlocked tapestry band (illustrated in full above). Alternating winged messengers holding staffs, and frontal human figures standing on balsa rafts (?). Classic Tiahuanaco. Coyungo, Rio Grande Valley, Peru. About A.D. 900. Textile Museum 1965.32.1. On view in the Ancient Peruvian Textiles Exhibition through April 15, 1967.

DRAWINGS by Milton Franklin Sonday, Jr.

PHOTOGRAPHS by Allen C. Marceron and Osmund Leonard Varela, and through the courtesy of Cooper Union Museum, New York, and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF ANCIENT PERUVIAN TEXTILES*

MARY ELIZABETH KING

The textiles of Preconquest Peru have constituted one of the wonders of the archaeological world. Their amazing state of preservation, the degree of competence exhibited, and their great range of technique, design, and color have made them famous. Although the Spanish chroniclers were the first to describe the magnificence of Peruvian textiles, they were aware only of the Inca production and that of the conquered coastal peoples. It could not have been long before prehistoric fabrics began to come to light, but it was not until the 19th century that the weavings of the earlier peoples came to the attention of the general public.

The earliest known depictions of archaeological Peruvian textiles are those commissioned by Baltasar Jaime Martínez de Campaña y Bujanda, a late 18th century Bishop of Trujillo. The bishop had over 1,400 drawings and water colors made of various aspects of Peruvian life. Since he was also a collector of antiquities, who supplied some of the pottery now in museums in Spain and France, he included archaeological objects in his illustrations. In 1936,¹ about 200 of the illustrations were published for the first time (Dominguez Bordona 1936). A total of 15 textiles from five plates are illustrated (Fig. 1) in the published series, but seven more plates of textiles are among those still unpublished.

The publication of William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Peru* in 1847 did a great deal to popularize Peru and its antiquities, though Prescott's work was based entirely upon that of the chroniclers. The comparative rarity of ancient textiles from most areas of the world and the advance publicity furnished by the chroniclers and their amanuensis, Prescott, caused the early textiles which reached Europe and North America to be greeted with awe and enthusiasm.

The first Peruvian textiles to be published were probably the four specimens (Figs. 2, 3) illustrated by Mariano Eduardo Rivero and Johann Jakob von Tschudi in their *Antigüedades Peruanas* (1851), the earliest work devoted solely to Peruvian prehistory. Rivero became the first director of the Museo Nacional de Lima, an institution devoted to the acquisition of "heterogeneous collections of rare objects or curiosities of nature or antiquity" (Herkheimer 1950: 55). This phrase reflects the widespread interest in antiquities in the 19th century, an interest which dated to the Renaissance. With the Industrial Revolution, man's increasing disturbance of the earth's surface led to a gradually deepening interest in and knowledge of prehistory. Such interest was further stimulated by Darwinian thought in the second half of the 19th century.

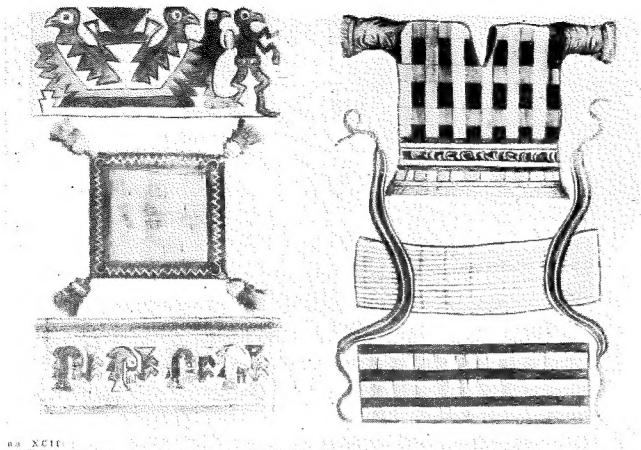
The U. S. Naval Astronomical Expedition to the Southern Hemisphere (1849-1852) collected Indian artifacts from Peru and Chile which were published in 1855. Among them were a few textiles from the extreme South Coast of Peru, near Arica, Chile. John Blake had visited the same general area in 1836 and had collected a number of textiles, baskets, and other artifacts, but these were not published until 1878.

During the last half of the 19th century there were a number of individuals, European and North American, who traveled in Peru for various official and professional reasons. One of these, E. G. Squier, was already the co-author of the first archaeological publication of the Smithsonian Institution, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, (1848), and therefore well qualified, for his time, to write on Peruvian antiquities. His travels took place after a tour of duty as U. S. Commissioner to Peru. His book, *Peru: Incidents of Travel and Exploration in the Land of the Incas* (1877), contains illustrations and descriptions of Peruvian textiles and other antiquities. Charles Wiener also published a work, *Pérou et Bolivie* (1880), based on a French archaeological and ethnological mission to Peru in 1875, 1876, and 1877. Collections made by Wiener were placed in the *Musée Ethnographique* in Paris. He too illustrates a number of textiles and other archaeological objects but, unfortunately, his proveniences are not always reliable.

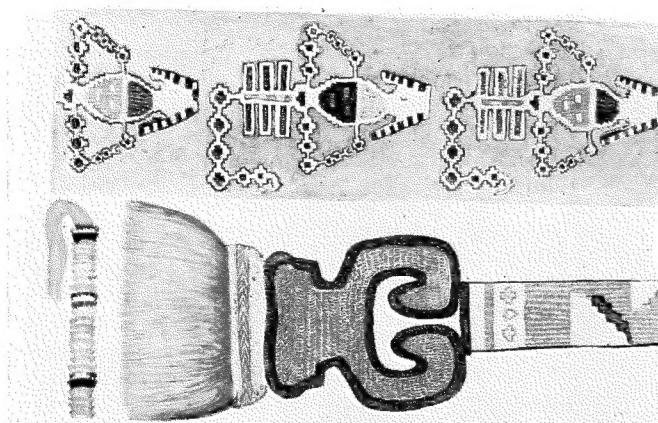
A third work of this period, earlier and less well known, was written by the British Consul at Callao, Thomas Hutchinson, and entitled *Two Years in Peru, with Exploration of its Antiquities* (1873). Although it is not as well illustrated, in terms of antiquities, as the works of Squier or Wiener, Hutchinson was an intelligent observer who often commented caustically on the misinterpretations and exaggerations of others.

Ernst Middendorf, a German physician who spent 25 years in Peru, and therefore can hardly be considered to have been traveling in the country, published a three-volume work in 1893-95 entitled simply *Peru*. Middendorf does not devote a great deal of space to Peruvian textiles, but he does mention them and illustrates a few pieces, presumably from Pachacamac.

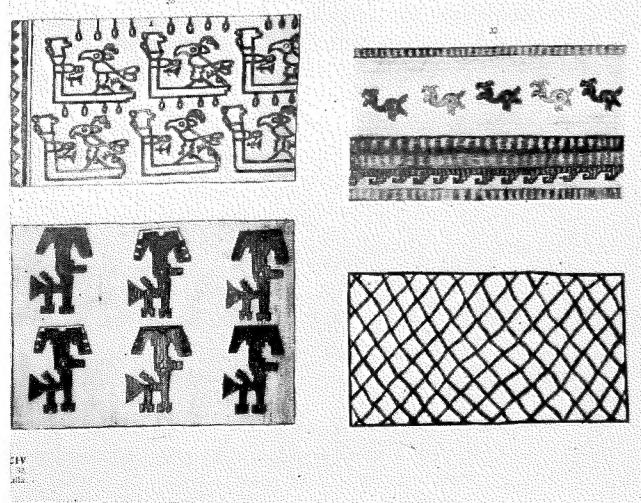
In 1875, two Germans, Wilhelm Reiss and Alphons Stübel, conducted the first methodical archaeological excavations in Peru at the site of Ancón. They excavated only tombs, (Fig. 5), but the result of this was that, in their own words, "in Ancon a method of interment was discovered hitherto unknown in any part of Peru, thanks to



a



b



c

Figure 1 (a) Two plates of textiles illustrated by Bishop Martínez Compañón (Dominguez Bordona 1936, Pl. 92). Note the similarity of the piece at left center to those in Figs. 2 and 4.

(b) A water color of three textiles from the Martínez Compañón collection (Dominguez Bordona 1936, Pl. 93). The principal colors are red and yellow.

(c) Sketches of four textiles making up two plates from the group commissioned by Bishop Martínez Compañón (Dominguez Bordona 1936, Pl. 94). One at upper left appears to be painted, and a net appears at lower right.

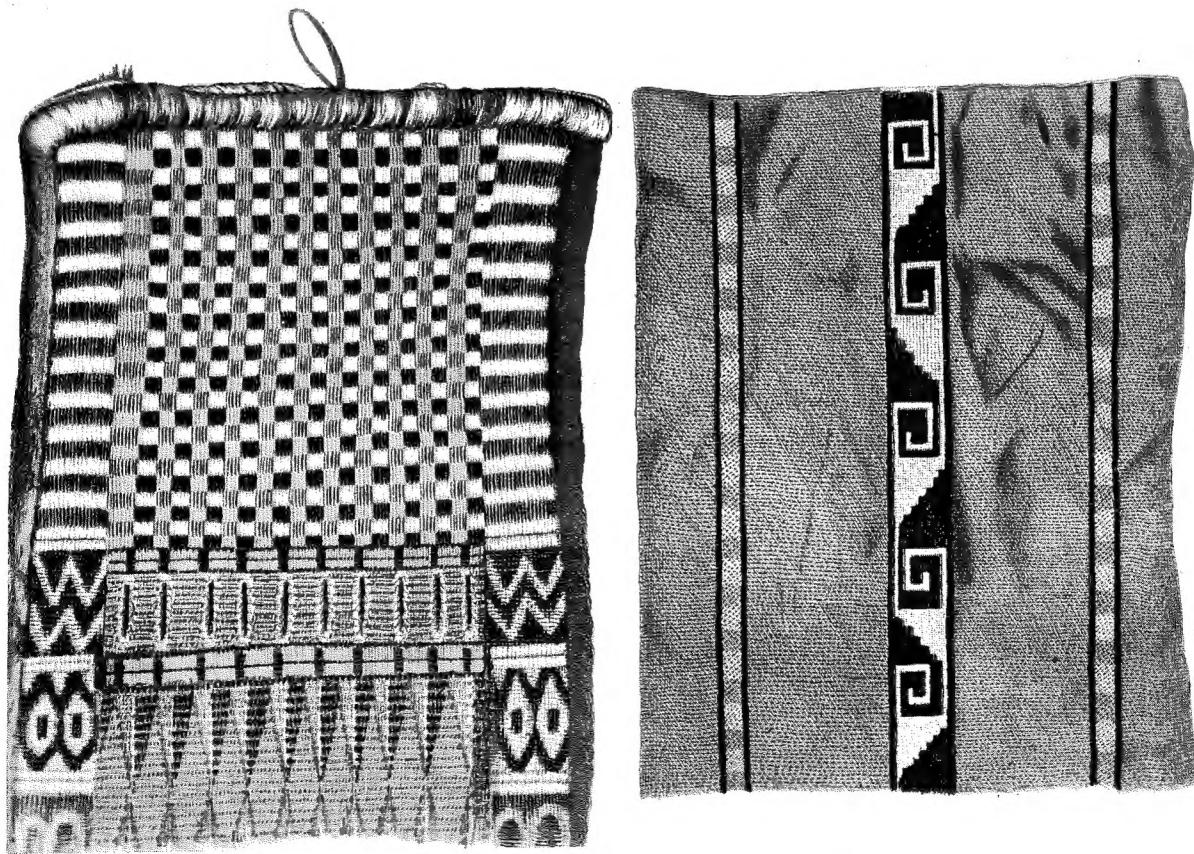
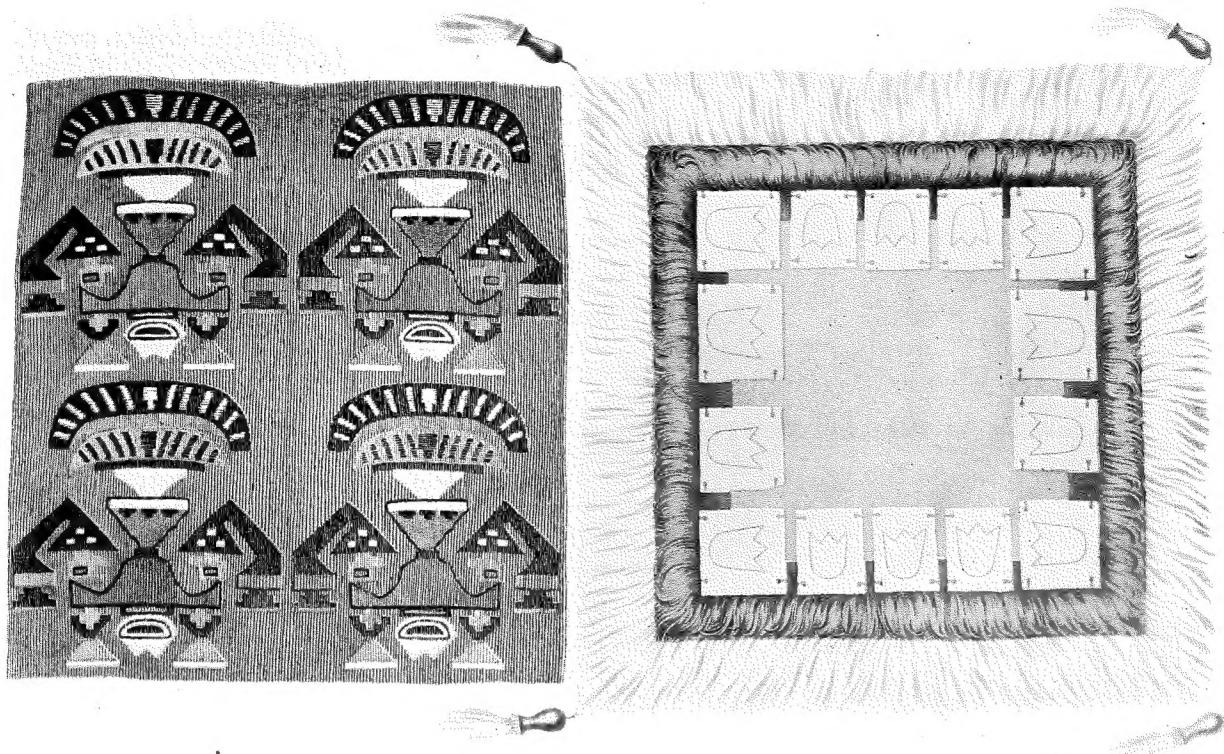
Figure 2 (opposite, top) Two textiles illustrated by Rivero and Tschudi (1851, Vol. 2, Pl. 37). That on the left is described as a manta from the huacas (burial grounds) of Chancay, while the feathered square on the right is said to have been one of twelve or more.

Figure 3 (opposite, bottom) A cotton double-cloth and a wool textile from coastal huacas illustrated by Rivero and Tschudi (1851, Vol. 2, Pl. 38).

which a large number of artistic costumes and richly coloured textile fabrics have been preserved" (1880-87, Vol. 1: page 4 of the unpage preface).² *The Necropolis of Ancon in Peru* was simultaneously published in German and English in 1880-1887, and consisted of three lavishly illustrated folio volumes. Almost the entire second volume is devoted to the textile finds, and most examples are illustrated in color. The publication had an immediate and widespread influence, inspiring such individuals as Max Uhle to Peruvian research.

At about this time, many of the world's major museums began to acquire collections of Peruvian antiquities. The personnel of the museums has played major roles in the study of Peruvian textiles. The acquisition of a small private collection by a Philadelphian, the collections of the Bureau of Ethnology (Smithsonian Institution), and the works of Reiss and Stübel and of Wiener, inspired what seems to be the earliest publication³ devoted solely to prehistoric Peruvian weaving. "Textile Fabrics of Ancient Peru" (1889) was written by W. H. Holmes, who was later to become the second director of the Bureau of Ethnology. Having previously (1888) discussed Peruvian design in a more general paper, "A Study of the Textile Art in its Relation to the Development of Form and Ornament," Holmes devoted himself to a discussion of how Peruvian tapestries were constructed—certainly the first such technical discussion in print. Holmes (1889: 17) ends his article with the following statement:

"A full discussion of the textile relics of the seaboard belt of Peru would require many additional illustrations. These cannot now be prepared to advantage as our collections are very incomplete....



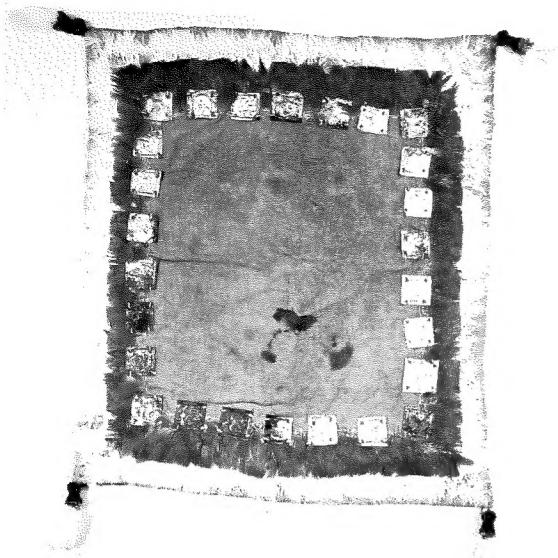


Figure 4 A cotton square, one of a set of miniature garments, trimmed with feathers and silver rectangles and said to be from Chancay. It is similar to a piece illustrated in Fig. 1a and almost identical with the textile illustrated at the right in Fig. 2 (T.M. 1962.9.3).

What is now particularly called for is a thorough study of the bearing of this great group of art products upon the questions of technical and aesthetic evolution, but this work is better postponed until more thorough exploration of the many burial sites is made."

It is a rather sad commentary on the present state of textile investigations that such a study not only has not been made but could not yet be made. Our collections are still incomplete and we must still await a "more thorough exploration of the many burial sites."

An interesting article on a particular kind of Peruvian textile, featherwork, is the Italian H. H. Giglioli's "Notes on Some Remarkable Specimens of Old Peruvian Ars Plumaria" (1894). An even earlier work (1875) by Ferdinand Denis has also dealt with Peruvian featherwork (as well as that of other areas), but Giglioli (1894: 222) regards the report as "interesting, but incomplete and not always accurate." Research on Peruvian textiles was proceeding apace!

The first decades of the 20th century saw the publication of many works of importance to Peruvian archaeology. Baessler, Bandelier, Bingham, Joyce, Means, Tello, and Uhle, to name only a few, all dealt with textiles to some extent, usually in works on more general subjects. It was during this time, however, that many individuals began to write specifically about Peruvian textiles.

Max Schmidt published two articles in German dealing with textiles, and especially with their designs (1910, 1911), long before he published his famous *Kunst und Kultur von Peru* (1929). Anna Barnett (1909, 1910, 1914, 1914a) wrote four short

articles on Peruvian textile techniques for the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* of Paris; another article by M. Valette (1913) is on Pre-columbian dyes. These were the first of a long series of articles dealing with the textiles of ancient Peru to be published by this distinguished journal.

In the United States, Charles Mead, the Curator of the Peruvian Collection at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, was publishing articles dealing with both technique and design, but especially with the latter. M. D. C. Crawford, who became a research associate in textiles at the American Museum (and was a Trustee of the Textile Museum from 1942 until his death in 1949) published a number of papers dealing with textiles from the technical point of view. In the first of these (1915: 56) he notes the work of Holmes and Schmidt and acknowledges the assistance of Mead but states that "So far as known to the writer no one has yet taken up the study of Peruvian textiles in this way." Crawford must be forgiven for his egocentricity in this regard, for technical studies were by no means common, and those which existed were both inadequate and uncertain. These early writers were not only feeling their way in their discussions of techniques, but their assigned conveniences were often completely unreliable. They were also apt to be a bit excessive in their praise.

In the 1920's, Philip A. Means began writing books and articles about textiles (1925, 1927, 1930) and his popular book, *Ancient Civilizations of the Andes* (1931), contains an entire chapter devoted to "The Art of the Loom in Ancient Peru." Another distinguished Peruvianist, T. A. Joyce, published brief articles on the Peruvian loom during these years (1921, 1922).

In Sweden, Gösta Montell devoted himself to the study of Peruvian costume, and his *Dress and Ornaments in Ancient Peru* (1929) has never been supplanted. Other shorter discussions of Peruvian costume have been published by A. Torres-Luna (1924), Rebeca Carrión Cachot (1931), and Nathalie Zimmern (1949).

After 1930, textile studies became more and more scientifically oriented. During the period of the 30's and 40's, the subject is dominated by two figures—Lila M. O'Neale of the University of California at Berkeley and Raoul d'Harcourt of the Société des Américanistes of Paris. From 1930 until her untimely death in 1948, O'Neale wrote copiously. Her papers, sometimes co-authored by A. L. Kroeber, sometimes by her various students and others, deal with many phases of the textile arts of Peru. As Professor of Decorative Arts, she shared her knowledge of textiles with many others, and a number of her students, such as Carolyn Osborne and Ina VanStan, have continued to publish in the field. Her successor as Professor of Decorative Arts at Berkeley, Anna H. Gayton (now retired), already had a long history of publication in Peruvian archaeology, and she has also added significantly to the body of textile knowledge.

Raoul d'Harcourt first published on Peruvian textiles in 1924 (with his wife Marguerite), but it was not until 1934 that his magnum opus, *Les Textiles Anciens du Pérou et leurs Techniques*, was published. It is a tribute to his painstaking analysis that, after more than thirty years' time, his book remains the best single work on Peruvian textiles. In 1962 a new English edition was issued which incorporates the many articles published by d'Harcourt after 1934. One of the editors of the new edition is, appropriately, a former student of Lila O'Neale, Carolyn Osborne. M. d'Harcourt today is the grand old man of the Peruvian textile field.

In recent years, the most noted authority on Peruvian textiles has been Junius B. Bird, Curator of South American Archaeology at the American Museum of Natural History and a Trustee of the Textile Museum. Although perhaps most famous for his work at the preceramic site of Huaca Prieta, Bird has dealt with and published textiles of all periods. He has also made a significant contribution by interesting large numbers of persons in the field.

The study of archaeological textiles has become increasingly refined. Expert advice is being sought in the fields of dye and fiber analysis. More attention is being paid to problems of conservation. Modern studies attempt to set forth a certain amount of factual information about textile specimens which can then be used by others working in the field. At the same time, more attention is being paid to the part played by textile studies in the wider anthropological investigations of man and his culture.

This brief survey of Peruvian textile studies over the last century does not pretend to be complete. Many important studies and scholars have not been mentioned. I have only attempted to point out the high spots and main trends. It may be noted that the study of prehistoric Peruvian textiles has followed the same lines as the whole study of prehistory. Many of the individuals and institutions involved are famous for their contributions to New World archaeology in general. Unfortunately, textiles often seem to have been considered apart from other artifacts. As we begin to study them as a part of the total production of a culture, we will be better able to understand both the textiles themselves and the people who made them.

**This paper is a slightly revised version of one written for the Ciclo de Conferencias y Mesa Redonda on the occasion of the Primer Centenario de las Ciencias Prehistóricas held in Lima, Peru, October 13-16, 1965.*

DR. MARY ELIZABETH KING studied anthropology at Cornell (B.A.) and Columbia University (M.A.) and wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on Paracas textiles for the University of Arizona. As Curator of Western Hemisphere Textiles at the Textile Museum, she traveled to Peru in 1957 and 1960 to study the collections in the National Museum and elsewhere.

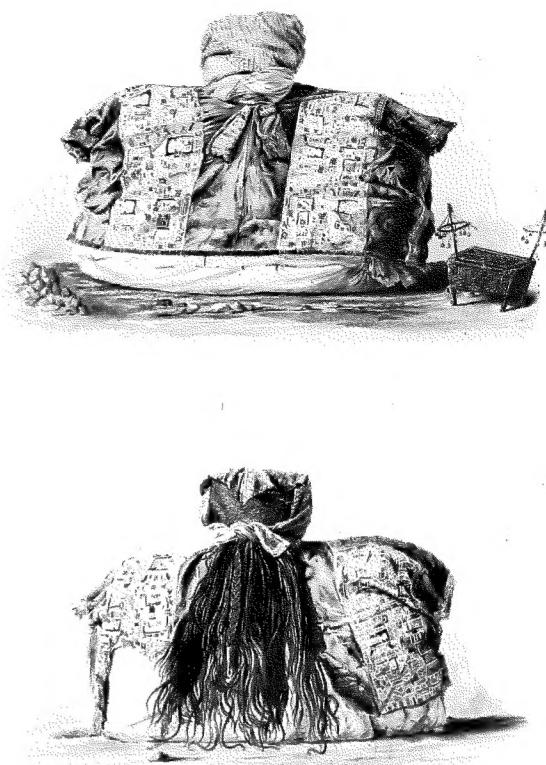


Figure 5 *A Tiahuanaco period mummy bundle excavated by Reiss and Stübel (1880-87, Vol. 1, Pl. 16) at Ancón. Note the elaborate tapestry poncho-shirt.*

NOTES:

¹ A few plates had been published somewhat earlier in a Spanish exhibition catalogue (Dominguez Bordona 1936: 7).

² This statement is not altogether correct, since Hutchinson (1873: 162) had already written of mummy bundles at Pachacamac, "All of these human remains were rolled round with cloth, and encircled with rope in the same style as those we got at Chosica."

³ An article by Antonio and Giovanni Negri, entitled "Tissus pourprés du Pérou," may be earlier in date. I have been unable to locate this reference or to determine whether it deals with archaeological or ethnological textiles.

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